



**OFFSIDE TAG**

JUST HAVE FUN WITH IT

# Rule Book

**Version 1.3**



## Associations

Offside Tag Australia



Offside Tag QLD



Offside Tag NSW



Offside Tag ACT



Offside Tag SA



Offside Tag VIC



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## Definitions

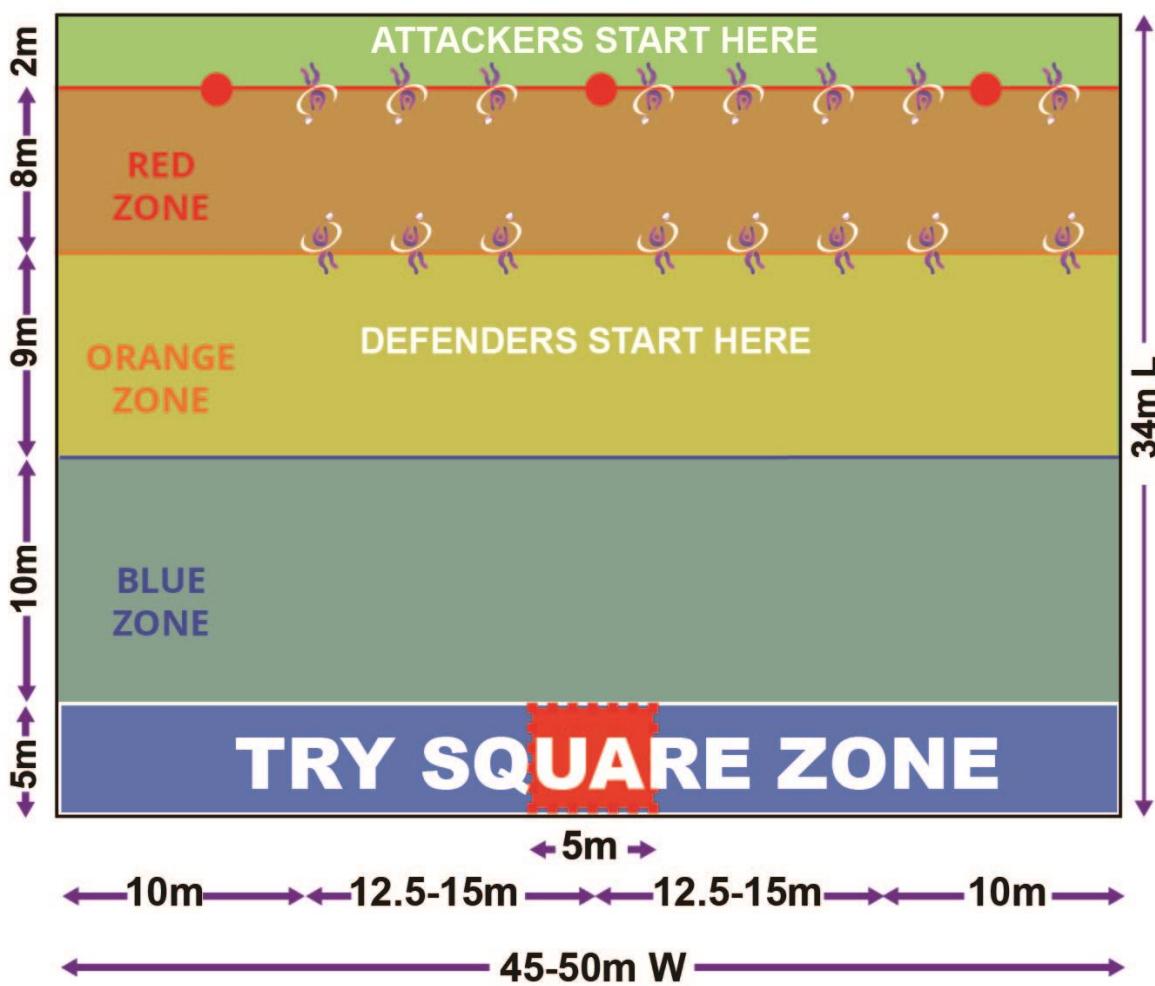
- Advantage – Play is allowed to continue
- Attacking Team – Team with the ball
- Ball Carrier – Player holding the ball
- Baulks – When a player pretends to start play
- Blue Line - Invisible line where the attacking team commences play if tagged inside the Blue Zone
- Blue Zone - Area between the blue line and end of try zone
- Changeover – When possession is handed to the opposing team
- Charging – Where player runs with the intention of knocking over another player
- Contact – Touching a player with force
- Countdown – Warning to commence or continue play
- Dead Ball Line – Area post the try zone
- Defending Team – Team without the ball
- Defensive Line – Line of defenders
- Downs – Number of plays attacking team have or have used
- Drop Off – Applied to Grand Final games where teams have 3 plays to score before losing 2 players (teams can lose up to 4 players, first team to score wins)
- Fake Tag – When a player calls a false tag
- Field of Play – Playing area
- Grounding – Ball placed on the ground with force and control
- Holding – When a player holds onto another players body part or accessory
- Late Tag – Attackers tag is removed, however, can be involved in the play
- Mixed – A team of mixed genders
- Orange Line - Invisible line where the attacking team commences play
- Orange Zone - Area between the red and blue markers
- Penalty Try – Point/s are awarded if the referee believes an infringement or foul play has prevented points being scored
- Play On – The game continues
- Points Infringement – Loss of points due to an infringement
- Red Line – Invisible line where the attacking team commences play
- Red Zone – Area between the orange and red markers

- Reload – When a down occurs and players wish to recommence play quickly
- Sets – 5x downs
- Scoring Zones – Try Zone, Square and Red Circles
- Shielded/Shielding – When a team member protects the ball player to avoid being tagged
- Spirit of the Game – Uphold the rules and enjoy the game
- Square – 4m square located in the try zone centre
- Tag – Material applied to velcro, located on players shorts
- Tag Off – Game deciding which team starts play or if in general play, a way to communicate if a player has lost a tag
- Tagged – When a tag is removed from the attacking player resulting in a down
- Tap On – When a player passes the ball on without control
- Try – When a player grounds the ball accumulating points for their team
- Try Line – The line behind which the ball must be placed to score a try
- Try Zone – 4m long x 45m wide area located at one end of the field where players score

## The Playing Field

## Field Dimensions

- $\frac{1}{4}$  Soccer/league field
- 34m Long x 45-50m Wide



## Field Features

- Red, Orange and Blue Lines – Attackers will always start play on one of the three lines
- Orange, Blue and Try Line – Defenders will always start on one of the three lines

- Red Markers – Defenders can counter attack by intercepting and touching the ball on the 45cm marker, achieving 2 points
- Try Zone – Only one end
- Try Zone – 1 point for a try
- Square – 2 points for a try
- Field Size – Ideal for all ages, shapes and sizes
- Attacking/Defending starting points – All plays commence from a set line/distance away from opposing team
- Try Zone Depth – Room for attackers to run behind defenders to create opportunities
- Huddle – Coaches/players area where substitutions can be made from

## Teams & Safety

### Team Numbers

- There are two (2) teams of up to eight (8) fielded players at any given time
- A minimum of five (5) players per side is required to play
- A maximum of four (4) male players can be on the field during a 'mixed' game
- No set rule applies for team sizes; however, a good team size is 12

### Substitutions

- Quick substitutions can occur after both teams have had one full attacking set each (or sooner if replacing an injured player). It is the responsibility of the team making changes that the correct number of players are on the field at any one time. A 'points infringement' can occur should an unfair advantage be gained during the game
- There is no formal stoppage of play during substitutions, however, referee's discretion can be applied
- Players must leave the field of play before a replacement is made

## Safety

- The game will be paused for a noticeably injured player until the player is safely removed from the field
- No hand, wrist or face wear i.e. watches, rings or hooped earring are permitted on the field (can be strapped over in some instances)
- Plastic studded boots are encouraged (no metal studs)
- No palming or physical contact causing intentional harm is permitted
- Players must remain inside the field at all times
- If ball travels onto another field, wait for play to be stopped before regathering
- If markers or lines are not used to indicate the 'dead ball line' and the ball surpasses the invisible line, the play ends
- Players cannot dive to remove a tag or score a try if the player is directly in front of them

## Game Length

- A standard competition game is 35min long with no half time
- Game times can be decreased for competition and tournaments and increased due to a Drop Off scenario

## Game Play

The aim of OST is to score more points than the opposition by 'grounding' the football in the 'scoring zone'. The 'ball carrier' is the most dangerous, yet most vulnerable player, as when a defender removes their 'tag', the play ends. Players not in possession of the ball cannot be 'tagged' or obstructed.

The winning team from 'Tag off' receives an advantage and commences the game with the ball. The **set commences** with attacker/s on/behind the invisible 'red line'

- Throwing the ball above and catching below head height

Note: This indicates that all players (attacking and defending) can move forward off their line except for the player starting with the ball, who is required to pass once in any direction before moving past their line.

All **attackers start** behind the red, orange or blue line to commence play with 5 'downs' available. This is determined by the last line attackers successfully passed. A 'changeover' occurs if

- Attackers do not score during their set or
- There is a major infringement

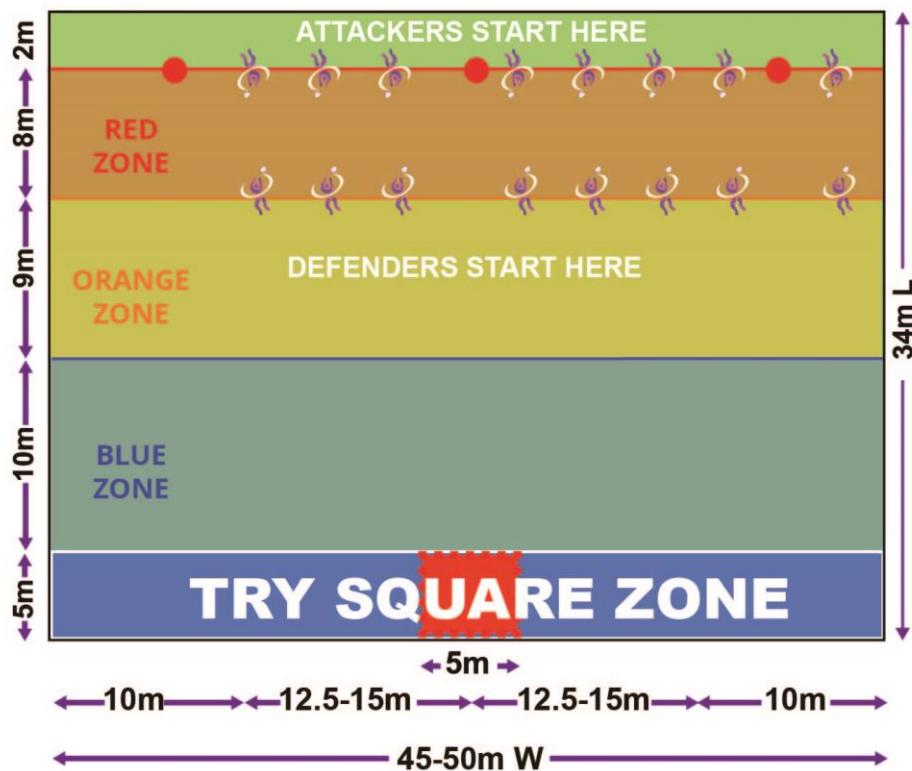
During play, **attackers can**

- Run in any direction
- Be positioned in front or behind the ball
- Pass in a 360-degree direction
- Have unlimited passes until ball carrier is tagged, ball dropped or an infringement has occurred

**Attackers restart play** once the ball carrier is tagged or loses control of the ball.

Play restarts on the

- Red line - located 27m from the try line if the ball carrier has not been tagged past the orange line
- Orange line – located 19m away from the try line if the ball carrier has been tagged past the orange line but not past the blue line
- blue Line – Located 10m away from the try line if the ball carrier has been tagged past the blue line and a try has not been scored



#### Restarting Key Points

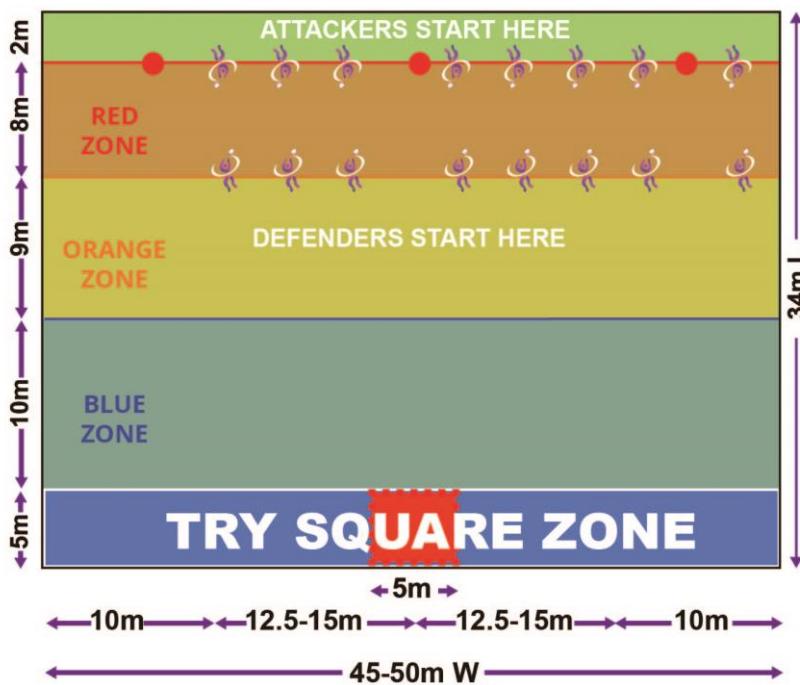
- Lost tags are to be reapplied before play restarts
- If attackers pass the orange or blue line during a down, and during the next play are tagged behind the orange or blue line, play recommences at the last starting line

- Attackers need to have control of the ball when tagged in order to advance into other zones, otherwise the play is restarted at the last restart line
- Attackers can start anywhere along the attacking line
- If a defender impedes an attacker's pass by knocking down the ball, it is considered an attacking error, resulting in a down
- If the ball is intercepted, unless it is the last down, the attacking team will receive the ball back regardless if the defender's team scores or not
- Defenders can pass the ball in any direction from point of interception
- The attacking team does not lose possession due to an error, unless it is the 5<sup>th</sup> down
- Teams have 10 seconds to get set for the next play and if
  - attackers are not set, they may lose a down
  - defenders are not set, they may give the attackers an extra down

**Defenders always start** on the invisible

- Orange line if attackers start from the red line
- Blue try line if attackers start from the orange line
- Try line if attackers start from the blue line

Note: See 12's and Under Game Variations.



Tags are used to replace tackling and create a safer game. Contact will occur, however, should be avoided where possible.

## Points & Winners

### To score points

- Attackers ground the ball in the
  - ‘Try Zone’ – 1 point
  - ‘Square’ – 2 points

Note: Girls receive 2 points regardless if they score in the try zone or square in mixed games.

- Defenders touch the red markers with the ball
  - 2 points

### Important notes

- In elimination games, the first point scorer wins in the instance of a draw. The exception to this rule is if it's the Grand Final, a Drop Off will occur.
- In a Drop Off the team who won Tag Off starts with the ball. The first team to score wins. Teams receive 3 plays each (1 set). Should neither team score in their first attacking set, both sides are reduced to 6 players. Teams are reduced to 4 players should neither team score in their next Drop Off set. The game will continue with 4 players and 3 plays p/set until a try is scored. Substitutions can be made during Drop Off once an attacking and defending team has played one set each.
- A penalty try worth 1 or 2 points can be awarded should an infringement or foul play prevent a try
- Should defending team be leading by 5 points or more, they are to start with a one-line gap between each play unless on the white line
- The Drop Off rule comes into effect for elimination games only

## 12's and Under Game Variations

- Defenders start with a one-line gap between the attackers except for when attackers are on the blue line i.e. Attackers start on the red line whilst the defenders start on the blue line

- Defenders cannot move until attackers pass the ball twice and attackers can't run past their starting line until the ball has been passed twice
- Ball must be passed twice behind the attackers starting line before the ball player can move forward
- There are no knock-ons for under 12s i.e. if the ball is dropped, it can be picked up and play can continue
- When the ball is on the ground, it can not purposely be batted to avoid picking up the ball (accidental fumbles are legal). If so, play ends at the point the ball was batted.
- There is no Drop Off rule for U12's. In an elimination game, the first team to score wins, placing heightened importance on tag off

Note: The Tournament Director/Venue Manager can impose rule modifications for younger age groups to encourage positive game play. This could include, however, is not limited to:

- Leniency on rules to create an improved game i.e. restart play from where the down occurred
- Adding mandatory passes
- Rotating attacking players who start with the ball or have majority possession of the ball to give other players a turn
- Not rule of minor infringements

## Tag Off

### Deciding who starts

- Teams form a circle (approx. 6m in diameter)
- Teams nominate 1 player each to start in the circle
- As the 'Viking Clap' commences, the two nominated players aim to remove their opponent's tag
- The aim is to tag the opposing player – the winning team receives the advantage of starting with the ball
- Tag Off is only played once unless it is a draw, then it is replayed

## Attacking Rules

The **game starts** with the ball player on the invisible red line and all attackers on or marginally behind the invisible red line. The ball player commences play by throwing the ball above head height and catching underneath head height. The ball must be passed once in any direction before the ball player can move up the field (all other players can move when the ball has passed head height).

Before each play or 'down', all attackers start behind the ball player. There are 5 downs p/set.

During play, **attackers can**

- run in any direction
- be positioned in front or behind the ball
- pass in a 360-degree direction
- have unlimited passes

**Attackers restart play** once ball carrier is tagged or loses control of the ball. Play restarts on the

- red line - located 27m from the 'try line if the ball carrier has not been tagged past the orange line
- orange line – located 19m away from the try line if the ball carrier has been tagged passed the orange line but not past the blue line
- blue Line – Located 10m away from the try line if the ball carrier has been tagged passed the blue line and a try has not been scored

### Restarting Key Points

- Lost tags should be reapplied before play restarts
- If attackers pass the orange or blue line during a down, and during the next play are tagged behind the orange or blue line, play recommences at the last starting line
- Attackers need to have control of the ball when tagged in order to advance into other zones
- If a defender impedes an attacker's pass by knocking down the ball, it is considered an attacking error, resulting in a down
- The attacking team does not lose ball possession due to an error, unless it is the 5<sup>th</sup> down or an attacking infringement is called
- If the ball player commencing play steps over the starting line in the act of passing, play may continue at the referee's discretion

It is the attacker's responsibility not to get tagged. If the ball player is tagged immediately after a passing, there will be no infringement (play on). The attacker will need to reapply their tag before regaining possession of the ball. If an attacker gains possession of the ball with one tag or less, and no 'late tag' was identified, the play will end at the point the ball was caught. A late tag will allow the attacker to continue play with one less tag. If a ball player is tagged simultaneously whilst passing or grounding the ball, advantage is given to the attacker. Referees' discretion can be applied to single tag scenarios.

If the ball players singlet/shirt is obstructing their tags, thus effecting the defenders ability to clearly remove a tag, a down/tag will be called when the defender is within tagging distance.

#### **A 'changeover' occurs**

- after 5 downs
- if team scores
- if there is an attacking infringement

The ball should be left where the changeover occurs.

In scoring situations, the ball player cannot dive or slide on their knees to score whilst a defender is impeding the scoring passage. It will be considered a tag/down. The attacker must remain on their feet. The ball player can dive to score, if a defender is not blocking the attacker's scoring passage. Players can drop to the ground after catching the ball in the try zone to score (not diving), even if a player is in tagging distance.

#### **A down will be called** and if a ball carrier

- or ball comes in contact with the referee during play
- has their shirt out and a defender is in tagging distance
- fends, bumps or shields tags with a body part or ball
- steps outside the field of play (including invisible field boundary lines)
- falls on the ground or the ball is dropped by either team
- throws the ball to themselves to avoid being tagged
- is purposely 'shielded' by a team player
- removes their own tag
- purposely delays or 'baulks' a set start
- receiver collides with a defender

Note: Play will restart from the previous plays line.

### **Other Key points**

- Referee interpretations/decisions can be made if it is within the 'spirit of the game'
- An exception to the ball player colliding with defender is if the receiver is running in one direction (without the ball), with eyes facing the opposite direction, and contacts the defender, it is the referee's discretion to call a down, penalty or play on
- If a player loses control of the ball where it doesn't touch the ground, however, comes in contact with an opposition player, play will continue, and set will not restart
- Players can run, step, pass, pivot, dip, spin, jump and swivel to avoid being tagged
- Players cannot initiate contact to avoid being tagged
- Attackers cannot purposely hide the ball to confuse defenders
- If tag/s fall off a players belt/shorts during game play, the attacker can continue play until a defender is within tagging distance, in which a tag will be called

## **Defending Rules**

**Defenders start** their defensive set on the invisible

- orange line – located 19m away from the try line if the ball carrier has not been tagged past the orange line and a try has not been scored

- blue Line – Located 10m away from the try line if the ball carrier has not been tagged past the blue line and a try has not been scored
- try line – if the ball carrier has been tagged past the blue line and a try has not been scored

Defenders must start in a line, then can move from their line in any direction once the ball carrier commences play by throwing the ball above their head. If the ball player fakes the throw, defenders can 'play on'.

When one or both the ball carriers' **tags are removed**

- play ends and a down occurs
- as there are no markers, defenders return to the orange, blue or try line
- tags must be dropped to the ground or handed to the attacking player
- and attackers have exceeded their 5 downs, a changeover will take place where defenders become attackers

A defender can continue play with 2, 1 or no tags, however, if they intercept the ball with tags missing, the play will end. If defender intercepts the ball, the defensive team can counter attack.

**A defender can/will be penalised if they**

- 'hold' on to an attacker and it affects play
- move late in front of a ball players running path, causing contact
- move in the attackers running path whilst the attacker is obviously looking in another direction
- contact another player without the intention of making a tag
- call a 'False Tag'
- do not release the attackers tag at the point of which the tag was made in a timely manner
- do not retreat to the defensive line prior to play commencing
- blatantly remove an attacker's tag without the ball
- do not stand on the defensive line in a timely manner
- Strike at the ball whilst in the attacker's hands (unless attempting to score)

Defenders can turn defence into attack by:

- 1) Intercepting the ball
- 2) Pressuring ball carrier through speed of defence
- 3) Stealing the football one on one

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## Penalties & Infringements

Penalties can result in an extra down, replay of set, player removed from the field, point deduction, point/points or changeover. Penalties will be taken on the

- red line located 27m from the 'try line if the ball carrier has not been tagged past the orange zone
- orange line located 19m away from the try line if ball carrier has past the orange line and is not been tagged past the blue line
- Blue line located 10m from the 'try line if ball has not scored

**Attackers restart play** once ball carrier is tagged or loses control. Play restarts on the

- red line - located 27m from the 'try line if the ball carrier has not been tagged past the orange line
- orange line – located 19m away from the try line if the ball carrier has been tagged past the blue line
- blue Line – Located 10m away from the try line if the ball carrier has been tagged passed the blue line and a try has not been scored

It is the referee's decision to award a penalty suitable to an infringement. This will be inconsistent at times; however, a judgment call will be made within the 'spirit of the game'.

The **referee can rule an infringement if**

- attackers commence play prior to all attackers retreating past the designated attacking line
- defenders leave the designated defensive line prior to play commencing
- players intentionally or unintentionally contact an opposition player
- players fend, strike, trip, forcefully bumps/collides/charges at a player
- players do not act in the spirit of the game
- players illegally enter the field
- player impedes an opponent without the ball
- the referee's decision is disputed
- ball players jump to avoid being tagged
- tags are protected illegally i.e. fending a defender's hand away
- the 10 second 'countdown' expires prior to or during play for time wasting

- offensive language is used
- there is misconduct
- if rules are not followed
- the spirit of the game is not followed

An infringement caution can be given to an individual player or team; however, it is not mandatory. If a player is removed from the field due to an infringement, it is at the referee's discretion if it is for a set, period of time or game.

If a player is removed from the game, a minimum of a 1+ game suspension is applied. Suspensions can be over ruled, pending the nature/circumstances of the decision. Players have a right to appeal. Teams playing a suspended player will forfeit the match. Players removed from the field for the remainder of the game may not be in the near vicinity of either team to limit further incident.

There will be no toleration for referee abuse. Referees have the full support of the governing bodies. Instigators and those associated in any form of harassment or assault of referees will be severely reprimanded. Referees should provide a report immediately after their match (written or video) of any major incidents during the game.

## Referees

### Referees are equipped with a

- whistle
- pad
- pen

### Referees responsibilities include

- checking fields prior to play to ensure a safe playing surface
- officiate the game in the best interest of the sport
- enforce rules
- start and stop play
- record scores, try scorers, time keep and officiate the game
- provide a 10 second countdown to teams to reposition themselves (this can be done by raising their hands so players can see and counting down with their fingers)

The whistle is used to effectively control the game. The referee will not blow the whistle if an advantage can be played. If the whistle is not blown and an advantage

was given, however, not taken advantage of, the referee will refer back to where the whistle could have been blown for an outcome.

Referees have the power to pause the game, remove players from the field and terminate the match. This includes, however, is not limited to

- poor weather/visibility
- spectator/player misbehaviour
- safety concerns
- injury

Referees will predominantly position themselves in or behind the defensive line to commence play, the centre of the field during play or behind the try zone.

## Referee Etiquette

- It is all about the game – players over pride
- Be positive and encourage fair play
- Be the referee player's respect
- Have no bias
- In confrontational situations, take deep breaths and respond calmly
- The safety of the players is of upmost importance
- Understand the rules and enjoy the contest
- Do not criticise fellow referees
- Wear the correct refereeing attire
- Stay fit and healthy
- Be reliable and attend designated games or find a replacement, the game needs you

## **Uniform**

For competition games, all players must have authorised OST

- Shorts/tights with Velcro on the hips
- Tags
- Shirts

Note: Unless cleared by management

For uniform contact

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or

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